

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed December 28, 2007, has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1 and 3-20 are now pending in this application. Claims 1 and 3-20 stand rejected. Claim 2 had been previously canceled.

The rejection of claims 1 and 3 – 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite “is displayed based on a user selection of the category”. Applicant submits that Claim 1, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112. Claims 3 – 8 depend from independent Claim 1.

Claim 9 has been amended to recite “is displayed based on a user selection of the category”. Applicant submits that Claim 9, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112. Claims 10 – 14 depend from independent Claim 9.

Claim 15 has been amended to recite “is displayed based on a user selection of the category”. Applicant submits that Claim 15, as amended, satisfies the requirements of Section 112. Claims 16 - 20 depend from independent Claim 15.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 112 rejections of Claims 1 and 3 – 20 be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1 and 3 – 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over US Patent 6,604,084 to Powers et al. (hereinafter referred to as “Powers”) in view of US Patent 6,625,511 to Suzuki et al. (hereinafter referred to as “Suzuki”) is respectfully traversed.

Powers describes an evaluation system (10) that includes a client space (12) that is implemented on a client platform (18), and a server application space (14) and a database space (16) that are implemented on a server platform (20). Using client platform (18), an

evaluator obtains a question table (150) that includes a questionnaire regarding a member (180). The user answers questions on question table (150) to evaluate member (180). The user's responses to the questions are delivered to server platform (20), wherein the responses are tabulated to produce a quality score(192) and a productivity score (202) associated with member (180). Quality score (192) and productivity score (202) can then be used to evaluate member (180). Notably, Powers does not describe or suggest facility evaluation categories being selected to identify critical areas with a production process. Rather, Powers describes selecting a configuration and selecting users to determine how imported productivity data is applied.

Suzuki describes an evaluation apparatus (10) that includes a workshop evaluating unit (10a) designed for evaluating, through estimation, the real abilities of the manufacturing workshops, and a product evaluating unit (10b) for estimating the fraction defective upon manufacturing of a product or component parts of the product at a manufacturing workshop. To perform the evaluation using apparatus (10), an evaluator selects an answer alternative (76) for each query item (75). A screen image output is provided that includes workshop improvement points (88a), a short-term measures plan (88b), and a long-term measures plan (88c).

Claim 1 recites a system for evaluating process performance, wherein the system comprises “a device . . . a server connected to said device and configured to receive process production capability information data using a computer, from a user via said device, said server further configured to . . . receive process production capability information data using a computer . . . receive a per category weighted value assigned by the user . . . compile the received information . . . displaying to the user information related to the production process . . . compare the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions . . . display the results of the compared information based on the weighted value assigned by the user to the user via said device wherein the results include a numerical score based on the weighted value assigned by the user representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to

perform a desired manufacturing function . . . display at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function.”

Applicants respectfully submit that neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests the claimed invention. More specifically, no combination of Powers and Suzuki describes nor suggests a system for evaluating process performance, wherein the system includes a server that receives information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by the user, including a weighting value assigned by the user. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of a member and presents an evaluation report by displaying information regarding the member's overall performance, in which all of the productivity and quality data are weighted equally for all members, and Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan, none of which are displayed according to weighted values assigned by the user.

Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 1 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 3-8 depend from independent Claim 1. When the recitations of Claims 3-8 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 1, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 3-8 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claim 9 recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process by operating a system including a server and at least one device connected to the server. The method comprises “defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user . . . receiving, using the computer, information relevant to the capabilities of the production process within the evaluation categories . . . receiving a per category weighed value assigned by the user . . . compiling the received information . . . comparing the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, to reference information in the form of answers

to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process . . . displaying the results to the user via the device wherein the results include a numerical score based on the weighting value assigned by the user representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function based on the weighted value assigned by the user . . . displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion is sortable based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

Applicants respectfully submit that neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests the claimed invention. More specifically, no combination of Powers and Suzuki describes nor suggests a method for defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user and a weighting value is assigned by the user. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes a performance evaluation method that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of a member and presents an evaluation report by displaying information regarding the member's overall performance, in which all of the productivity and quality data are weighted equally for all members, and Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan, none of which are displayed according to the weighted values assigned by the user.

Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 9, as herein amended, recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process including steps essentially similar to those recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 9 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 10-14 depend from independent Claim 9. When the recitations of Claims 10-14 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 9, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 10-14 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claim 15 recites a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network connecting a plurality of users, the network including a server and a plurality of user display devices. The method comprises “receiving, from the users using a computer, information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process, wherein the evaluation categories are selected by the users . . . assigning each evaluation category at least one weighted factor that normalizes the received information with respect to a relative contribution to a process capability improvement of the received information assigned by the user. . . compiling the information received from the users with the server . . . evaluating the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, in comparison to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process . . . displaying the results to the users wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function based on the assigned weighted value . . . displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherin the at least one suggestion is sortble to the plurality of users based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

Applicants respectfully submit that neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests the claimed invention. More specifically, no combination of Powers and Suzuki describes nor suggests a method for defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user and a weighting value is assigned by the user. Rather, in

contrast to the present invention, Powers describes a performance evaluation method that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of a member and presents an evaluation report by displaying information regarding the member's overall performance, in which all of the productivity and quality data are weighted equally for all members, and Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan, none of which are displayed according to the weighted values assigned by the user.

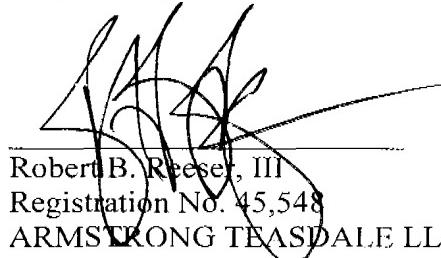
Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 15, as herein amended, recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process including steps essentially similar to those recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 15 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 16-20 depend from independent Claim 15. When the recitations of Claims 16-20 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 15, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 16-20 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 103 rejection of Claims 1 and 3-20 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, all the claims now active in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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